SYNOPSIS

SEARCHING FOR THE SIMPLE LIFE: RUSTIC ELEMENTS IN THE SELECT SHORT STORIES OF RUSKIN BOND

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APPENDIX - 1

Title of the thesis:

Searching for the Simple Life: Rustic Elements in the Select Short Stories of Ruskin Bond

Introduction:

Ruskin Bond is one of the most prolific writers of India today**.** He has written about twenty one novels/novellas, five hundred short stories, seventeen essays,eight travel writings ,and seventeen song and love poems .He received the *Sahitya Akademi Award* for English writing in India for *Our Trees Still grows in Dehra* in 1992.He was awarded the *Padma Shri* in 1999 for his contributions to children's literature

He was born on 19 May 1934, at Kasauli in Himachal Pradesh to a first generation British migrant. He went to England for his primary studies. He studied and graduated in 1952 from Bishop Cotton School, Shimla.His father, Aubrey Alexander Bond, was with the Royal Air Force during World War II in India. He has one sister and brother, Ellen Bond and William Bond. When Bond was four years old, his mother was separated from his father and married a Punjabi-Hindu. After his high school education in Shimla, Bond spent four years in England displaying his literary talent. He wrote his first novel named *The Room On The Roof* when he was only 17 years. It is a semi-autobiographical story of the orphaned Anglo-Indian boy Rusty. The book made him win prestigious *John Llewellyn Rhys* prize in 1957 that is awarded to British Commonwealth Writers who are under the age of 30. The book was primarily based in and around Himalayas and was successful in capturing the beauty and ethos in a manner that was never tried before. It was followed by its sequel named *Vagrants in the Valley*. He worked for some years as a journalist in Delhi and Dehradun. Since then, he has written over three hundred short -stories, essays and novellas including *The Blue Umbrella*,*Funny Side Up* and *The Flight of Pigeons* and more than 30 books for children. His interest in the paranormal led him to write popular

titles like *Ghost Stories from the Raj, A Season of Ghosts, A Face in the Dark and other Hauntings.* He has also written some travel writings, love songs and poems. Since 1963 he has lived as a freelance writer in Mussoorie with his adopted family in Landour, a town in the Himalayan foothill. The rustic element finds a prominent place in his writings. His writing style is distinct in a way that it tries to make reader understand the landscape and ethos through carefully mastered words. His stories manifest a deep love for nature and people with a tinge of soft humor and quiet wisdom. He writes in a thoughtful manner about the local colours of the places in which he resides and describes nature as the object of beauty, freshness, calmness,tenderness and innocence. He writes about rustic people living in local rural areas,their culture,their way of living. He vividly describes about the hills, valleys, rivers, climate and the surroundings.The hills of Dehra, Shimla, Shamli, Landour,Mussoorrie are often present at the backdrop of his stories. His short stories, in particular, present mesmerizing descriptions about the flora and fauna of Himalayas. The stories reflects the human experience of hope and desire,of excitement and disappoinment .

Ruskin Bond's notable works are categorized as short stories which includes:*The Eyes Have It,The Wish,Angry River,Boys Will Be Boys,Delhi Is Not Far,The Women on Platform 8,Dust on The Mountains,The Road to Shimla,Ranji's Wonderful Bat,Rusty Runs Away,The Blue Umbrella,Night of the Leopard,Granny's Tree Climbing,Mountains of Dehra*.His other collections are:*Tiger in the Tunnel*,Garland *of Memories, Book of Saki,Funny Side Up*.His six classic novels includes:*Room On the Roof,Vagrants in the Valley,Delhi Is Not Far,A Flight of Pigeons,The Sensualist and A Handful of Nuts.*

Ruskin Bond writes about the dreams and desires,childhood memories.One can have an emotional trip by reading some of the stories which may relate to our life experiences. His works provide insight into universal themes such as the tension between past and present,city life versus rural values, the dignity of ordinary folk, preservation of the environment and living in harmony with nature. He writes of leopards padding down the lanes of Mussoorie after dark, the first shower of the monsoon in Meerut that brings a feeling of new life, the chorus of insects at twilight outside his window, ancient banyan trees and the short-lived cosmos flower, a bat who strays into his room and makes a night less lonely. He shares a deep relationship with nature and his stories flow smoothly with a positive brightness --no dramatic flourishes, no villains, no ugly fights in them. There is warmth and the simple pleasures of life which make them so very endearing.

A brief review of the work already done in the field:

Ruskin Bond is a much discussed writer and a number of critical studies have appeared on his writings but they mainly concentrate on his fiction and travel writings. Some critical works have been made on the short stories yet there is a lot to be explored. This study will be an attempt to analyse Bond's use of rustic atmosphere and elements in his selected thirty representative short stories and how in the simple lives of these people one can find the meaning of life.

Objectives:

(i) The study aims to trace the rustic atmosphere in the selected short stories.

(ii) To study the human values and personal bonding in the short stories.

(iii) To study Bond's concern for environment.

(iv) To analyse various colours of nature in short stories.

Noteworthy contribution in the field of proposed work:

Ruskin Bond is well known as a writer of children literature,travel pieces and fiction.Though a great deal has been written on his works, much remains to be explored and analysed particularly on his short stories.Some of the noteworthy works by various authors on Ruskin Bond's works are as follows:

(i) Fatima, Gulnaz.*Ruskin Bond's Biographical sketch*.Modern History Press.2012.

(ii) Singh,K. Prabhat.*The Creative Contours of Ruskin Bond : An Anthology of Critical Writings*.Pencraft Publications.1995.

(iii) Aggrawal,Amita. *The Fictional World of Rukin Bond*.New Delhi.Sarup & Sons Publication.2005.

(iv) Khorana .G,Meena.*The life and works of Ruskin Bond* .2003.

(v) Kumar,Ramendra.*A Landour Day with Ruskin Bond* .Business Line Publisher.2010.

Proposed methodology during the tenure of research work:

Analytical method will be followed and the latest edition of *MLA Handbook for Writers of Researh Papers* shall be consulted.

Chapter I –Introduction

Ruskin Bond is one the most distinguished writers of India today. He is appreciated for the sensitive and thoughtful expression in his writings. His uniqueness lies in the way he derives ideas from day-to-day, mundane life and writes about it simply, yet deeply.

He writes stories, poems and fiction for both children and adults. He is the writer of five hundred short stories, twenty one novels/novellas,seventeen essays,eight travel pieces and seventeen songs and love poems and still continues to write more.Some of them are: *The Room on the Roof,Delhi is Not Far,Vagrants of the Valley,Once upon a Monsoon Time,A Garland of Memories,Funny Side Up,The Adventures of Rusty,Crazy Times with Uncle Ken, A Face in the Dark and Other Hauntings,Hip Hop Nature Boy and Other Poems,Four Feathers,The Tiger In the tunnel* etc. When he writes about solitude and suffering, he turns the reader numb, with just a handful of words and subtle sense of humour. Perhaps, it has something to do with what life offered him. Ruskin Bond's favorite themes are-nature,hills,rain,trees,rivers,plants, pets, animals,orphans, abnormal children,restless adolescents and frustrated old men whom he portrays with genuine compassion.He weaves all of them together in his writings.

Ruskin Bond was born on 19 May 1934, at Kasauli in Himachal Pradesh. He spent most of his childhood in amidst Himalayas that included Jamnagar, Dehradun, Shimla etc.This made him to have an attachment with the nature, and so his writings also offer a lot to know about the surroundings of hills of Himalayas. Bond writes about life in rural areas and about their hardships. Ruskin Bond manages to weave simple, joyous tales all times

refreshing, fragrant with the smell of nature and a charm that makes one to read them again and again.

Chapter II – A brief survey of Ruskin Bond's short stories

Short stories are a kind of prose fiction, which has grown up beside the novel, and it has its own important and recognized place in literature today. Ruskin Bond is a master of short story and has written more than 300 short stories for children and he still continues to write. His vision to look at the world with a child's eyes lies is his beauty of writing.Bond writes about innocence,tenderness and freshness.In *Time Stops at Shamli* Bond writes about the charm of the hills and the nature can be experienced as he narrates what happens in India.He writes about life in country side.The small incidents that takes place can be identified in this short story and one can undergo similar emotional trip.The stories revolves around the adolescent effect.

The reader can identify himself with the characters in this story.There is intelligent humorous touch embedded in every story. *How Far is the River* describes irresistible desire of a young boy, who has never seen the river in his life,because he had heard about the rocks, currents and waterfalls. He wanted to touch the flowing water.So one day he crossed the valleys and even after certain disappointments he fulfills his desire to touch the river water and feels the flow of river water.*In Road to the Bazaar* one can ride back to the childhood memories when one used to hesistate to talk to strangers,and were always curious to know everything.In these stories Bond writes about the playful things of early childhood and how anyone undergoes the feeling of fear,disappointment and desire.In *A Town Called Dehra* Bond writes about the diminishing of life's values,there is lots of cruelty and death,people have started choosing bad habits.and lost their ethical values. In *Garland of Memories* he writes about childhood memories ,about choodhood experiences and innocence of heart along with tenderness .He writes about day to today dewellings of people living in hilly areas.Similar description of nature can also be seen in other short stories like *Rain in the Mountains* in this short story Bond writes about nature ,*Our trees still grow in Dehra* ,*The Night Train at Deoli* etc.

Chapter III – Beauty and ethos of the Himalayas

Ruskin Bond was born among the hills,so most of his writings describe about the surroundings. His writings reflect the local elements of Himalayas. The reader can understand

the landscape and ethos in most of his short stories. In *Time stops at Shamli* he writes about the landscape and beauty of the foothills and the railway station fascinates Rusty one of the character in short story. He makes up his mind to explore what is there beyond the stations . In *Dust on The Mountains* he writes about special flavours in the area such as the smell of the Himalayan hills. Bond says that if it creeps into the blood of a man,he will return to the hills again and again.In *Rain in the Mountains* Bond describes about the season of rain where everything is at its best.One can feel and imagine the fragrance of freshly drenched earth, with the season's first rain and how it cleanses the senses, relaxes and freshens, better than any other thing.In *Our Trees Still Grow in Dehra* he writes about hills of Garhwal and the life in small towns and villages,which has a lasting effect in one's mind.It has a close description of the hill sides,the colourful flowers all add charm to the beauty of the hills.One can experience the calmness and peace of mind which will cause anyone to regain the senses. Complete with quiet wisdom,Ruskin Bond's stories manifests a deep love for mother nature and people. Bond writes about how nature provokes one to be calm and experience the deep silence.The hills of Himalayas are covered with snow which is the sign of purity of heart. The colder climate also affects the life in the Himalayas, the plants and the animals .The people residing in the Himalayas have to undergo a lot of hardships to earn their livelihood but still they are happy and satisfied.They never seem to get distracted by the outer world.

Chapter IV –Physical environment and the inner world

The short stories of Ruskin Bond provide a rare experience to the vast and varied shades of physical environment which unknowingly leads the reader to know his inner world. Nature in the broadest sense is equivalent to the natural world-physical and material world.Nature also refers to the phenomena of the physical world and the life in general. Mountains of Himalayas are world famous for its beauty.It presents various shades of life as people living in hills are innocent and they never give up in difficult situations.They cope up with the daily life troubles and they struggle hard for survival.There life is not based on artificial outlook.They have strong belief and their decision making is based on the moral values and remain unaffected by the materialistic things.

The flora and fauna in nature teaches to be calm,tender and innocent .The physical features of Himalayas are the soaring heights,steep-sided jagged peaks,valley and alpine glaciers.These descriptions lead the readers to understand the depth of human heart and

mind.The atmosphere of his stories have a great impact on the minds as they are filled with hope and passion. In *The Road to the Bazaar* the stories bring to life the amusing exploits of Suraj, Ranji, Koki and their friends, as they grow up in the small hillside town of North India. Bond writes:

> Some say the real India is to be found it its villages; others like to think that India is best represented by its big cities and Industrial centres. For me, India has always been an atmosphere, an emotional more than a geographical entity; but if I have to transpose this rather nebulous concept into something more concrete, then I would say that India is really to be found in its small towns.(33,*Scenes from a writers's life*)

Bond presents the everyday incidents that shape their lives: there is Mukesh's visit to the Delhi zoo which inspires him to start his own; Koki's beetle race against Bhim and Ranji that results in an unexpected winner; and Suraj's great train journey which sees the forging of an unlikely friendship in a goods train. *The Adventures of Rusty* is a story of a boy Rusty living with his grandparents in Dehra and he is surrounded by some odd animals, people and relatives, he goes to school and one day decides to escape from the place due to curiosity to explore the other side of the world,wanders among the valleys and the story is all about his daily life encounter and realization of self.

Chapter V- Characterisation-blending of experience and innocence

There is vivid description of life in rural areas in the short stories of Ruskin Bond.People are simple and enjoy being the part of hills. He is a writer of common man living with ordinary delights and sorrows .They are ordinary, simple, educated and uneducated men and women like house servants, shop-keepers, schoolboys, thieves, gardeners, beggars, wrestlers, school-teachers, farmers, soldiers,drivers. One can also experience the childhood memories .Ruskin Bond likes children because they are more frank open minded, and emotional. Bond creates characters of adolescents like Rusty who is a highly responsible youth and cherishes a definite aim in his life. Vijay in the story *Sita and the River* becomes a blue skinned god,Krishna, to save Sita from the angry river. He is by all means a normal village boy but his appearance on the scene when Sita is struggling hard for

life,transforms himself into God. Kishen Singh in the story *The Tunnel* who belongs to the rural class understands the forest and its creatures very well.He is scared of the city and its people because they bring havoc in his peaceful surroundings.Bond also takes interest to portray woman in a feministic way. In his stories the woman like Sita, Binya,Madhu appear as soft hearted and tender girl. In *Time Stops at Shamli* Sushila appears in diverse roles of a mother and a wife with practical values.The charm of all these characters is quite fascinating.In *A Kitemaker* there is heart touching description of a kitemaker who like a kite dies struggling hard for life. Bond's characters find themselves unable to cope with logical pressures,they have to win over practical humanism and realization.Characters like Vijay, Binya and Rusty are motivated by similar instinct. They are capable to change their own lives as well as that of others.Bond's world is the world of the poor and the middle class people and his greatness can be seen in the originality and naturalness of these characters. His stories presents simple and innocent world where the characters are not swayed away by the worldly possessions,they struggle for their survival and their is sympathy and compassion for other humans also.He presents every aspect of human behavior which remains hidden sometimes.He presents his characters in such a way that at the end of the story there will be sympathy for the wicked and cunning characters as their intention was not to harm anyone but was due to the circumstances.Bond presents his characters with core humanity which can only be observed,enjoyed and appreciated.

Chapter VI –Rustic shades in narrative technique

The writings of Ruskin Bond are based on real life experiences and are excellent examples of the unforgettable harmony between man and nature. The names of the characters are real and they present real India living at countryside.He writes about life in small towns and villages and also uses local dialect in his writings like mem sahab,babuji, bhabhiji, masterji etc.Bond found India among villagers, farmers, vendors, coolies, school boy, old people and among hills. In *The Night Train at Deoli* Bond narrates how the narrator comes to Deoli Railway Station. It is a small station about thirty miles from Dehra. And he meets the stationmaster and unknown young girl.The story *Sita and the River* is an allegory of life.In this story Sita becomes the universal predicament when she assumes that the only protector is Vijay as Lord Krishan. Bond has a unique,lucid,simple and flexible style in writing which catches instant attention .

Chapter VII- Conclusion

Ruskin Bond takes pleasure in writing about nature and the natural surroundings.He writes about human experiences,some truths about life and human behavior,and that is the characteristic theme in all his works.The stories itself expands the theme with some moral and philosophical ideas There is lot of thoughtfulness, imagination,consciousness of mind, of his early life experiences and human conduct which involves directly or indirectly some comment on values in human nature on the good and bad, on the true and the false and some concepts of where is the place of human in the world.Bond writes about landscape and social life of the region that he has experienced in his early years and he moulds them through his vision. His description consists of landscapes and vivid sketches of life. The landscapes depicted by Bond seems to be inseparable and are related to the lives of his characters. Isolated from the characters, they have no significance. He establishes a relation between the nature and the humans. The topographical description introduces the reader about the unique landscape and atmosphere. The rustic places in his stories can be recognized by every Indian. With photographic accuracy he records the local topography, architecture, manners, customs, rituals, superstitions and character types. Bond's rustic stories present a type of realism with actual life situations.He has a keen eye for detail and depicts everything as he sees through his wonderful mind – the beauty of a rural landscape, the squalor of a street, the orphans & abnormal children, a scene in the city, the cosiness of the bedroom in a happy middle class home or the crowded discomforts of a third class railway compartment.He has sympathy with children and woman characters and presents them as virtuous,tender,innocent,graceful and generous people.For him family relationship is the fundamental part of life and so he treats them with equal observation and sympathy. He depicts the reality of human emotion and individual consciousness as there is struggle for identity and true meaning of life. Bond believes that everything that happens in nature and in human life happens for a reason. He recognizes that man's deeds; his 'guilt' or 'sin' bears the responsibility for his future.Despite of melancholy in most of his stories, he is optimistic about the final outcome.

Expected outcome of the proposed work:

The study will focus on the in-depth analysis of the rustic elements in the selected short stories of Ruskin Bond. It will highlight his concern for environment, human values and

relationships.The study will explore the quiet wisdom and philosophy as all of his writings breathe out the pure and serene atmosphere of the hills.

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